

**IMPEDIMENT TO KNOWLEDGE AND IMAGINATION
IN RAY BRADBURY'S DYSTOPIAN NOVEL,
*FAHRENHEIT 451****

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Abstract

This article touches upon the critical, contextual and thematic analysis of Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel, Fahrenheit 451(1953) to demonstrate how the totalitarian state envisioned in the book impedes imagination and knowledge. The protagonist, Guy Montag plays a pivotal role in reflecting the oppressive structure of the system and the possible consequences of defiance. The misuse of technology and banning of books shape monotype individuals thereby quite relevant to the discussion of the article. Thorough manipulation and control become instrumental in hampering knowledge and imagination. However, ultimately, such a repressive state does not wholly become successful in manipulating all citizens. The divergent individual whose awareness is aroused is turned into an isolated outcast by the system in this dystopian world. Although certain divergent characters cannot succeed in overcoming the system, they are functional in reflecting the failure of the system.

Keywords: Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451, Dystopia, Defiance, Oppression, Totalitarianism, Books, Failure, Surveillance, Control

Öz

Ray Bradbury'nin Distopik Romanı Fahrenheit 451'de Bilgiye ve Hayal Gücüne Engel

Bu makale Ray Bradbury'nin distopik romanı Fahrenheit 451'i (1953) eleştirel, bağlamsal ve tematik açılardan incelemeyi ve sunulan totaliter, baskıcı rejimin hayal gücünü ve bilgiyi nasıl engellediğini göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ana karakter, Guy Montag sistemin baskıcı yönünü ve başkaldırmanın sonucunun neler

**This article is the revised and expanded version of the paper presented at the Midwest Conference on Utopian Studies, 20-21 March 2015, organized by Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana, the U.S.A.*

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olabileceğini anlamakta oldukça önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın konusuyla bağlantılı olarak, teknolojinin suiistimal edilmesi ve kitapların yasaklanması bireyleri tek tip olarak şekillendirmektedir. Ayrıca, kapsamlı manipülasyon ve kontrol bilgiyi ve hayal gücünü kısıtlamada da etkilidir. Sonuç olarak, böylesi baskıcı bir rejim, sistemin farkına varan isyankâr bireyi toplum dışına itmişse de, tüm vatandaşları tamamen kontrol altına almakta başarısız olmuştur. Başkaldıran bazı karakterler sistemin üstesinden gelemeseler de sistemin başarısızlığını göstermeleri açısından önemlidirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451, Distopya, Başkaldırma, Baskı, Totaliterlik, Kitaplar, Başarısızlık, Gözetim, Kontrol

It's fine work. Monday burn Millay, Wednesday Whitman, Friday Faulkner, burn 'em to ashes, then burn the ashes. That's our official slogan (Bradbury 15).

Ray Bradbury depicts an imaginary world that does not illustrate a promising future through representing a society that curbs the blooming of knowledge and imagination by means of burning books. In the restrictive society of the dystopian novel, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), firemen are employed in order to burn the books the moment they come across them, which curbs imagination, curiosity, and creativity, so the government can maintain absolute power and exercise a thorough control over citizens.

The three chapters of the novel, "The Heart and the Salamander," "The Sieve and the Sand," and "Burning Bright" represent the dystopian vision through the experiences of the protagonist, Guy Montag, a fireman whose seeming contentment with his job is disrupted by the arrival of the female character, Clarisse McClellan. Montag demonstrates the difficulty of going beyond the suppressive limits of his society due to restriction and prohibitions. Bradbury presents the traditionally positive terms, fireman, the books, and the hound, which "slept but did not sleep, lived but did not live in its gently humming, gently vibrating, softly illuminated kennel back in the dark corner of the firehouse" in a different way, which are presented in a negative, destructive light in his dystopian work (Bradbury 24).

The society in *Fahrenheit 451* is a representative example of a dystopian society, which is defined as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which that reader lived" (Sargent 9). This dystopian novel came into existence as a result of certain shorter works namely, *Bonfire*, *Bright Phoenix*, in which "a town librarian is threatened by the local patriot bigot in regard to a few dozen books aching to be burned", and *The Pedestrian*, in

which all pedestrians are treated as criminals and walking is forbidden, *The Fireman*, and then finally *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury 216). In this light, the process through which the novel went through demonstrates that it came into existence as a result of certain political and social developments of the period such as book burning by the Nazi Party, World War II, the Cold War, and McCarthyism, which, had “the widespread effects—direct and indirect—of the political repression of the era,” and the technological developments of the age, especially television (Gibson 514).

The twentieth century was “a century of hostility, an epoch in which the brutality of mankind erupted and flowed more expansively than ever before” (Kressel 27). The period witnessed, thus, the rise of the totalitarian, dictatorial regimes that restricted most of the rights of the individuals in order to maintain their absolute power thereby bringing the culture of submissiveness into their own system and excluding or punishing the defiant ones. Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany, and Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union are commonly considered to be examples of such suppressive systems that hamper freedom, the right of free speech and education to a great extent in this century. Stalinism for instance, was not “simply nationalism, bureaucratization, absence of democracy, censorship, [and] police repression ... Instead Stalinism was excess, extraordinary extremism, in each” (Cohen 12).

Similarly, Nazism was totalitarian and extremist in that it had the “technical weapons of ... oppression, the armed Storm Troopers and the centralised control of the administration” (Pascal 56). Bradbury himself also touches upon the reality of the totalitarianisms of the time: “*Fahrenheit 451* is all about Russia, and all about China ... And all about the totalitarians anywhere, either left or right, [it] doesn't matter where they are, they're book burners, all of them” (Bradbury qtd. in Aggelis 116). In this regard, books posed serious problems for these regimes since their system was based on absolute orthodoxy without questioning or judging the norms and values of their rule.

Thus, Nazi Germany burned over 25,000 *un-German* books on Opernplatz in Berlin in public, which manifests that the domineering structure was against knowledge, enlightenment, and cultivation. These events had a substantial influence over Bradbury's dystopian vision in *Fahrenheit 451*, which is named after the temperature at which book-paper burns. In this dystopian world, firemen minister to burn books through “the fire trucks with their mythic salamander iconography” instead of putting out fires, as reading books is against the law (Roberts 31). People are afraid of books due to the belief that books impose negative, unnecessary ideas and

opinions on people' minds and confuse them with conflicting theories and knowledge; therefore, people do not need to read them to gain knowledge and to enrich their imagination pursuant to the expectations of the state.

The protagonist, Guy Montag for whom burning books is a mere pleasure in the beginning, is presented as a typical state fireman whose helmet is numbered 451. He is married to Mildred Montag, who does not have a deep, inquisitive personality. She watches television quite often and is a compulsive user of narcotics to the degree of overdose. Guy Montag's world is shaken with the arrival of Clarisse McClellan, a seventeen year-old girl, who does not adapt to the values of the system. Clarisse questions Montag's life with her critical remarks that cause contemplation, self-examination and reflection.

Her introspective character leads to the loss of belief in the system for Montag and he ends up being a fugitive in the end. The ethno-methodological perspective through which individuals make sense of the world, and which "offers a distinctive perspective on the nature and origins of social order," imposed by the system gradually vanishes, and this results in his seclusion (Maynard and Clayman 174). However, the system punishes the individuals that do not conform to its instructions and practices through the Mechanical Hound, and any other means the state can make use of. Through the abuse of the technological advancements, the totalizing structure does not allow the personal, social and intellectual development of the individuals in the society, yet, the system does not reach an overall success in this dystopian atmosphere, where the individuals are dependent on technology to such an extent that there is no room to expand their vision and horizon, which reflects "a world of diminished sensation" with a limited vision (Smolla 909).

Technology, in this regard, functions effectively for the interest of the state and "mind-dulling government-run media being a linchpin in maintaining a totalitarian society" turns out to be a powerful means of manipulating the citizens (Bohanon and Hutson 25). The Mechanical Hound is specially designed to live up to the expectations of the rule in order to maintain their (anti-) utopian ideal. It is depicted as half-asleep, with eight insect legs, humming, vibrating, and almost always suspicious.

The dry, callous aspect of the system is reflected in the disposition of the creature as it does not like or dislike, but only functions. Although the dogs are conventionally regarded as loyal to people and protective, Bradbury shatters this grand-narrative by tendering the Hound as destroyer. This manipulative and totalitarian attitude turns out to be a common property in many dystopian novels such as George Orwell's *1984* (1949), in which the panopticonic society in Oceania leaves no room for thinking, sex, and

writing; Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), in which individuals in the New World are socially categorised, birth control, sleep-teaching and soma are applied to maintain the stability of the system and; H. G. Well's *A Modern Utopia* (1905), in which the society is organised according to four classes of mind, namely the Poietic, the Kinetic, the Dull, and the Base by the domineering structure, which controls individual's and children's education substantially.

Hence, in line with the objectives and the ideology of the system, the Hound cannot think anything that the state does not want it to think, so it turns into a strategically very important weapon as Captain Beatty points out: "It's a fine bit of craftsmanship, a good rifle that can fetch its own target and guarantees the bull's-eye every time" (Bradbury 39). The individuals that attempt to read books, thus, turn into the targets, the possible threats to be destroyed via the Hound accordingly.

The totalitarian state, therefore, impedes the flowering of knowledge and imagination as it is hazardous to the culture of conformity because the individuals who imagine different worlds turn out to be rebellious for the system (as in the case of Montag) since they are not submissive. Hence, the system desires to create and shape individuals in such a way that they are under constant surveillance and submissive. The dystopian world order produces fear and dehumanised states, and accordingly, attempts to turn people into mechanized individuals exterminating curiosity to knowledge and imagination; however, the system fails to function faultlessly since certain figures turn defiant in view of their aroused awareness.

The state designs a society in which individuals are happy as happiness is accentuated as the basic need of people. Thus, they are provided with happiness without imagination and knowledge, as pointed out by Beatty:

You must understand that our civilization is so vast that we can't have our minorities upset and stirred. Ask yourself, what do we want in this country, above all? People want to be happy, isn't that right? Haven't you heard it all your life? I want to be happy, people say. Well, aren't they? Don't we keep them moving, don't we give them fun? That's all we live for, isn't it? For pleasure, for titillation? And you must admit our culture provides plenty of these. (Bradbury 78)

Captain Beatty's words insinuate that the individuals do not need to wear themselves out by reading or contemplating over alternative solutions in order to achieve happiness as the governing structure gives people what

they seek for: mere happiness. However, it is paradoxical that the system takes away the opportunity to envisage other systems, solutions, and to broaden knowledge under the pretext of bestowing happiness since imagination is an essential part of human beings. Once the protagonist starts imagining, he is isolated from the society and must be destroyed both literally and metaphorically in order for the system to function; but the system cannot function flawlessly as some individuals become aware of repression and rebel against the system, which hints at the failure of the system.

In this regard, whatever book makes the individuals upset, the basic solution is to destroy it by burning. If the oppressed people do not like a book like *The Story of Little Black Sambo* (1899) by Helen Bannerman, which is about an Indian Boy who overcomes some tigers by giving some parts of his outfit, and which came under attack due to its allegedly racist illustrations and its use of the words for the characters, *Sambo*, *Black Jumbo* and *Black Mumbo* that have pejorative and discriminatory connotation, the state burns it. If the white people do not feel good about *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* (1852) by Harriet Beecher Stowe, which depicts anti-slavery through the protagonist, Uncle Tom, who is beaten to death upon the slave owner, Simon Legree's order and who becomes a symbol of anti-slavery causing many slave owners to set the slaves free and to lead a devout Christian life, the state destroys it. In this novel, the protagonist plays a crucial role in changing a good many people's mind regarding slavery as stated in the end: "Think of your freedom, every time you see UNCLE TOM'S CABIN; and let it be a memorial to put you all in mind to follow in his steps, and be honest and faithful and Christian as he was" (Stowe 545). However, the state does not want people to get informed about such books.

Thus, the state intends that people should not complicate their minds with these *unnecessary* books inasmuch as these books have nothing in them that can help the cultivation of minds with regard to the manipulative objectives of the state. This structure circumscribes the development of the individual remarkably, and is similar to the authoritarian rule in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1931), in which the state provides soma, freedom and sex. In Huxley's dystopian vision, a similar structure applies: hypnopaedia or sleep-teaching and Neo-Pavlovian conditioning are an important means of oppressing individuals, restricting their lives and brainwashing them in order not to breach the rules of the totalitarian State.

The hatred of the books turns out to be a common feature in these two dystopian novels, though burning books is the basis of *Fahrenheit 451*, and an instrumental strategy of the dictatorial regime – ironically, to provide

happiness. In Huxley's *Brave New World*, the groups are conditioned and taught knowledge, slogans like "Happiness for all, happiness for each" and the limits of their position (35). Conditioning deters children from nature and books (through explosions and bells), and makes children unable to touch or smell flowers and actually turns them into mechanised individuals.

The infants feel terrified "at the approach of the roses" because "books and loud noises, flowers and electric shocks – already in the infant mind ... [are] compromisingly linked" (Huxley 17). This process causes them to grow with a hatred of books and flowers instinctually. Accordingly, blocking books becomes a powerful means of oppressing imagination and knowledge in both dystopian worlds. Likewise, the regulatory rule claims to give what the individuals desire, which is mere happiness in *Fahrenheit 451*, but this desire is somehow enforced upon the individuals thereby causing conformity in the society and becoming a desire of the state.

Although the governing body wishes to achieve absolute obedience through the system based on the herd mentality and mere happiness with no other vision and knowledge than the given one, there are individuals that are divergent towards the instilled ideas, thoughts, practices and norms of the mainstream society. Thus, these people become rebels, fugitives, outcasts, or castaways such as Clarisse McClellan, Professor Faber, who is a retired English professor, and Granger, the leader of Book People. These divergent individuals in the novel remind us or imply that the system, in which "unhappiness and dissent are squelched," does not function flawlessly, which brings the question of the feasibility of such a society of total conformity (Patai 41). Hence, such a system with full success is not possible to be practiced even though the structure forces these defiant figures to be silent. The resistant figures are made to lead a segregated life in isolation owing to their rebellion against the governing body, but they desire to establish a new world order, which demonstrates the failure of the system inhibiting access to knowledge and imagination.

The divergent figure, Clarisse plays quite a pivotal role in the novel as she subverts the grand narrative of the regime with her critical, analytical and vivacious personality leading Montag to question his life. Her physical properties and make-up leave a drastic impact on Montag shaking his previous values, thoughts and feelings, and her question about whether he is happy or not becomes the turning point in his path to defiance. Furthermore, she questions the suitability of his profession reminding him of his unique, different propensity. These hard-hitting and extraordinary questions give rise to the realization of his feelings in reality:

Darkness. He was not happy. He was not happy. He said the words to himself. He recognized this as the true state of affairs. He wore his happiness like a mask and the girl had run off across the lawn with the mask and there was no way of going to knock on her door and ask for it back. (Bradbury 20)

Clarisse is a far cry from the mainstream citizens that are afraid of firemen as she describes herself as crazy, basking in the moment, a nature lover, having a strong desire for knowledge and enjoying looking at the sky imagining different, alternative worlds. Her maturity and unusual character is stressed in the description of her as being “like the eager watcher of a marionette show, anticipating each flicker of an eyelid, each gesture of his hand, each flick of a finger, the moment before it began” (Bradbury 19).

Clarisse criticizes the education system that functions to the interests of the system as the schools do not educate children to gain critical perspectives; on the contrary, they are trained to be passive so that they are not aware of their miserable states. It is implied that the children are gathered and not given the opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions. Instead, they are given an hour of TV class, an hour of baseball, basketball, running, and an hour of painting pictures (Bradbury 41). She, therefore criticizes the structure of the system with her remarks: “[D]o you know, we never ask questions, or at least most don’t; they just run the answers at you, bing, bing, bing, and us sitting there for four more hours of film-teacher” (Bradbury 41-2). In this respect, she becomes the mouthpiece of Bradbury’s criticism towards the system that does not enable children to ask questions because they are only given the answers, which does not permit intellectual sophistication. If the children lack the ability to ask questions, the potentiality for the thorough progress of the society does not exist, which leads to a society with submissive, uncritical individuals since questioning is a prerequisite for development, socially, culturally, and intellectually; however, questioning is dissipated by the state in Bradbury’s dystopian vision.

In addition to Clarisse, Montag’s wife, Mildred Montag is quite crucial in that her indifference and callousness spark Montag’s passion for knowledge and his need for imagination. Mildred, as an ideal citizen of the state, does not care about the critical analysis of the system, so she shows her indifference through her interest in fixing his pillow. As a consequence, Montag comes to such a point where he cannot communicate with the submissive citizens of the repressive system like Mildred as they lack fervour for knowledge and imagination, which later turns into a total escape from the totalitarian state. Montag and Mildred start leading different worlds

as implied by Mildred's remarks: "Books aren't people. You read and I look around, but there isn't *anybody!*" (Bradbury 95).

Mildred and Clarisse are juxtaposed in order to present two different conflicting women with different backgrounds, ages, perspectives, and attitudes in the system. Clarissa is keen on learning and imagining, whereas Mildred is addicted to television compulsively, indifferent to imagination and questioning. She can be taken as the ideal citizen of the overbearing system, and happy with what she is granted. Thus, she is "consciously and unconsciously blissfully uninformed... a spouse in name only and is not even a distant friend, much less sensual lover" (Roberts 29). Subsequently, she is the monotype, uniform individual, whose individuality does not reflect a free choice and intellectual sophistication as opposed to the young but mature female character, Clarisse.

Mildred is in pursuit of pleasure, whereas Clarisse is discontent with the society and the civilization, which arises due to different interpretations of civilization and the purpose of life. The pursuit of pleasure and its connection to civilization is explored by Sigmund Freud, who argues that people look for happiness and want to remain happy: "[T]hey seek happiness, they want to become happy ... it aims on the one hand at eliminating pain and discomfort, on the other at the experience of intense pleasures ... the word *happiness* relates only to the last" (8). Regarding individuals that prefer to live in seclusion, Freud states that "[v]oluntary loneliness, isolation from others, is the readiest safeguard against the unhappiness that may arise out of human relations" (8).

In this sense, Mildred does not want to disturb her conformity, and thus keeps herself away from pain and discomfort aiming at mere happiness, whereas Clarisse chooses to contemplate alternative visions and worlds so as to achieve happiness, which causes her dissatisfaction with the so-called civilization and to live her life isolated. In this regard, civilization turns out to be the one to blame as stated by Freud: "our so-called civilization itself is to blame for a great part of our misery ... our present-day civilization does not inspire in us a feeling of well-being ... Liberty has undergone restrictions through the evolution of civilization" (13-17). Freedom of citizens is regulated to a great extent by the state, and misery is inflicted upon citizens with a view to maintaining the stability and power of the state under the pretext of civilization, which is criticized by Clarisse, Montag and the Book People in the course of this dystopian vision.

Montag has now become an individual questioning his own existence and the totalizing structure:

There are too many of us, he thought. There are billions of us and that's too many. Nobody knows anyone. Strangers come and violate you. Strangers come and cut your heart out. Strangers come and take your blood. Good God, who were those men? I never saw them before in my life! (Bradbury 25)

The world created is dull and full of strangers like the living dead: "One, two, three, four, five, Clarisse, Mildred, uncle, fire, sleeping-tablets, men, disposable tissue, coat-tails, blow, wad, flush" (27). All these images in his mind cause Montag to change his mould and to be re-shaped, re-constructed in a way so as to be free from the restricting bonds of the repressive system; however, to trespass the boundaries of the rule cannot be easily practiced due to the strict punishment design of the regime. Thus, he is pushed into isolation on the grounds that he is aware of the silencing facet of the ruling body.

Montag, nonetheless, becomes curious about the books that used to be possible threats causing fear and anxiety. His interest in the books grows gradually as he continues hiding as many books as he can instead of burning all of them. The initial positive light of burning for him gradually disappears since burning does not provide pleasure any more. On the contrary, the catastrophic and pernicious facet of burning is accentuated as the sun and time are burning. The sun burns time; time burns people; firemen burn books and people, and ultimately Montag becomes aware why he "must never burn again in his life" (181). He starts reading and shares his excitement with Mildred and her friends, Mrs. Phelps, Mrs. Bowles, and Millie. Thus his development is a "path of self-knowledge, of discovery and of growing awareness – of himself, of other people, of society, of what man has made of man" (Feneja 17). However, these female figures react on different levels as Mrs. Bowles turns out to be a submissive character that is afraid of violating the rules of the system, whereas Mrs. Phelps cries upon Montag's reading of Matthew Arnold's poem "Dover Beach," which is about sadness, melancholy, and life: "Sophocles long ago / Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought / Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow / Of human misery" (Lines 15-18). Upon the tears, Mrs. Bowles associates poetry with tears, suicide, awful feelings, and sickness.

However, these reactions do not stop Montag's enthusiasm and curiosity for the books. On the contrary, he becomes more critical and brings his defiance into action as the dystopian novel progresses. He criticizes the whole structure as: "School is shortened, discipline relaxed, philosophies, histories, languages dropped ... finally almost completely ignored. Life is

immediate, the job counts, pleasure lies all about after work. Why learn anything save pressing buttons, pulling switches, fitting nuts and bolts?" (Bradbury 73). These remarks demonstrate his growing dissatisfaction with the whole system as he looks for intellectual sophistication in such a repressive atmosphere.

In this dystopian atmosphere, citizens are kept under thought control through censorship and conditioned not to approach the books as they internalise the hatred of them. The regime is afraid of imagination and knowledge to such an extent that it portrays all the books as dangerous and malignant: "A book is a loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it. Take the shot from the weapon. Breach man's mind. Who knows who might be the target of the well-read man? Me?" (Bradbury 77). Knowledge gained through books is, therefore, regarded as a threat to the totalitarian state and to its stability. Accordingly, the projected belief that books are not useful is spread, and the state desires to extend its knowledge, which is "a sub-class of true beliefs" in its own right (Russell 139). The beliefs of the individuals, who mostly behave submissively, are manipulated, and this explains why individuals believe what they do: "It is hoped that by studying the psychology of belief, those who control propaganda will in time be able to make anybody believe anything. Then the totalitarian state will become invincible" (Russell 52). Thus, burning as one of the restrictive means of the governing body becomes a common practice of censorship all throughout the country so that the books cannot poison and complicate the minds of the individuals, which reinforces the power of the state.

Fire, flames and burning can be interpreted on two planes both constructively and destructively in the novel depending on the point of view. The bright side of the flames can turn into a means of giving inspiration and different alternative visions, but in *Fahrenheit 451*, burning is presented in a destructive light since it shatters the inspiration of the individuals, originality, critical thinking, and the urge to learn something although the reader is presented with signs of lingering hope and optimism through the recount of a Phoenix. Moreover, through censorship and suppression, it turns the citizens into apprehensive figures and intimidates them as Professor Faber, a retired English professor, hesitates to help Montag due to his fear of the totalizing structure.

Although Bradbury represents a dystopian vision through censorship, and thought control, the end of *Fahrenheit 451* cannot be interpreted negatively. Bradbury criticizes censorship and totalitarianism, which is similar to John Milton's defence of freedom of expression and of the press in his historical tract, *Areopagitica* (1644), in which he expresses that one can

learn from the books regardless of their contents stressing the significance of books and their connection with reason: “[H]e who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God ... a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit” (Milton 3). Through Milton’s expressions, censorship is recounted in the course of various historical moments such as the burning of the books of Protagoras by the judges of Areopagus, the burning the books of those people who were labelled heretics, and the burning of the Ephesian books by St. Paul’s converts.

However, the last part of Bradbury’s dystopian vision is not pessimistic in the face of such a repetitive problems of censorship and thought control. Montag manages to escape from the system and the system kills someone else making the citizens believe that Montag is dead: “The search is over, Montag is dead; a crime against the society has been avenged” (Bradbury 192). Free from the threat of the system, Montag joins the Book People, some of whom have had plastic surgery on their faces and their fingerprints removed. The existence of these Book People, who attach great importance to imagination and knowledge, gives the reader hope for a possible transformation of the present society, and testifies to the failure of the system.

These Book People wish to pass their knowledge of books such as Plato’s *Republic*, Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, and the writings of Aristophanes, Mahatma Gandhi, Gautama Buddha, Confucius, and Bertrand Russell to the next generations. The Book People, who desire to keep the knowledge they have safe and intact with their “photographic memories,” lead outcast life styles due to their intellect, imaginative power, and enthusiasm about books (Bradbury 194). Through the efforts and attempts of these people, Bradbury gives an optimistic message of hope for the future. One of the Book People, Granger recapitulates the story of a Phoenix, a mythological bird that can regenerate and is re-born out of the ashes upon burning himself. This correlation sheds light on their purpose of building up a new society out of the ashes of the totalitarian repressive society, which fails. They are precautious about the new society so that they will not make the same mistake.

Correspondingly, a mirror factory is attempted to be constructed, which reiterates the significance of self-criticism and introspection. Change can be accomplished only through self-betterment by looking in the mirror to create a new society in which critical thinking, knowledge and imagination can flourish. The last part of the novel points out that there is still space for a better, constructive society in stark contrast to the existing society: “And on either side of the river was there a tree of life, which bare twelve manners of

fruits, and yielded fruit every month; And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Bradbury 211).

In conclusion, Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel, *Fahrenheit 451* deals with a range of issues like censorship, thought control, burning books, and intellectuality, and demonstrates how the totalitarian state puts an obstacle to imagination and knowledge in this dystopian vision. The totalitarian state desires to create a society of absolute submission with submissive individuals who do not read books and are not critical due to absolute repression and constraint over citizens in this dystopian novel. The system exercises strict punishment through the Mechanical Hound and firemen once the individuals are caught reading books, which are burned by firemen as soon as they are found; therefore, the majority of citizens avoid reading books or do not believe that books are useful. However, this dream does not come true despite such a strict, suppressive system as figures like the Book People, Clarisse and Montag do not act as the ordinary, mainstream citizens.

The protagonist, Guy Montag plays an essential role in representing the structure of the system and what the possible consequences of resistance might be. Monotype individuals are shaped through discarding books and the maltreatment of technology. Imagination and knowledge are confined by means of overall control and manipulation. Nonetheless, the totalitarian state cannot succeed in controlling all citizens since some individuals defy the omnipotent structure of the system. These figures who become more aware and rebellious are pushed into seclusion and separated from the mainstream society. The system kills someone else in their place in order to make citizens believe that the divergent figures are exterminated, and free from the risk and threat of the system. These figures continue living in reclusion, and attempt to convey their knowledge with their lingering hope of a new free society. Although they are not successful in subverting the governing body, they function effectively in mirroring the failure of the system as not all citizens are manipulated thoroughly.

Escape from a domineering society is made possible through the deeds of the protagonist, Guy Montag, who has a strong desire for transformation after his enthusiasm is rekindled. Montag becomes a changed person in the aftermath of what he goes through as stated by himself regarding his attitude towards books: “I can't talk to my wife; she listens to the *walls*. I just want someone to hear what I have to say ... And I want you to teach me to understand what I read” (Bradbury 107). Through Montag, who is a transformed protagonist, Bradbury questions the probability of building up a new society in which imagination and knowledge are not impeded. The rebellious individual, whose awareness is aroused in stark contrast to the

manipulated citizens of the society, becomes an outcast, and is compelled to live in seclusion.

Clarisse dies, a woman who refuses to leave her books burns herself, dies, the Book People live in seclusion, and Montag is pushed to exclusion. However, these contumacious individuals substantiate the failure of the totalitarian, coercive structure and render a hopeful, optimistic ending via the open-endedness of the dystopian vision implying betterment and development in the future as the Book People and Montag go back to the demolished city to contribute to the building of a new society in Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. The system fails ultimately in its purpose of forming a society of absolute allegiance and submissiveness, and dystopian world gives its place to a possible, prospective utopian world to be established:

Montag felt the slow stir of words, the slow simmer. When it came to his turn, what could he say, what could he offer on a day like this, to make the trip a little easier? To everything there is a season. Yes. A time to break down, and a time to build up. Yes. A time to keep silence and a time to speak. Yes, all that. But what else. What else? Something. (Bradbury 211)

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In Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, you journey to the 24th century to an overpopulated world in which the media controls the masses, censorship prevails over intellect, and books are considered evil because they make people question and think. The story is told by Guy Montag, a fireman who burns books for a living. When examining *Fahrenheit 451* as a piece of dystopian fiction, a definition for the term "dystopia" is required. The crucial difference is that Bradbury's novel does not focus on a ruling elite nor does it portray a higher society, but rather, it portrays the means of oppression and regimentation through the life of an uneducated and complacent, though an ultimately honest and virtuous, working-class hero (Montag). Presentation on theme: "RAY BRADBURY *Fahrenheit 451*. It was a pleasure to burn." Presentation transcript: 1 RAY BRADBURY *Fahrenheit 451*. 2 It was a pleasure to burn. He then stole fire from the gods for his new creation, allowing people enlightenment and knowledge. Zeus was angry at Prometheus for three things: being tricked by the sacrifices, stealing fire for man, and refusing to tell Zeus which of Zeus's children would dethrone him. Zeus had his servants, Force and Violence, seize Prometheus, take him to the Caucasus Mountains, and chain him to a rock with unbreakable chains. 12 Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*, 108. This essay is part of a series on dystopian literature. The Imaginative Conservative applies the principle of appreciation to the discussion of culture and politics—we approach dialogue with magnanimity rather than with mere civility. Will you help us remain a refreshing oasis in the increasingly contentious arena of modern discourse?